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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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TORNADOES IN THE UNITED STATES

Tornadoes are notoriously commoner in the United States and southern Canada than in any other part of the world. In the United States a special effort has been made in recent years by the Weather Bureau to collect complete and accurate statistics of these storms, and a recent fruit of this undertaking is the publication in the last Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture of a small chart showing the relative frequency of tornadoes in different parts of the country, as determined from the records for the 13-year period 1916-1928, inclusive. The country is divided into equal sections 100 miles square (10,000 square miles), and the chart shows the average annual number of tornadoes that occurred in each section.

The highest figure on the chart is 3.2 in extreme northeastern Kansas. This figure means that within an area of 10,000 square miles in that part of the country tornadoes average a little over three a year. As, however, the average destructive area of a tornado is only about 10 square miles, the "tornado expectancy"

for any particular place within the region mentioned would be only one-thousandth as great as that of the entire area. The next highest figure, 3.0, is found in central Arkansas, while over Iowa the figures range from 2.0 to 2.5. Some scattered sections in the eastern states, including all of Maine, had no tornadoes during the period considered, and tornadoes were lacking or very scarce everywhere west of the Rockies.

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